

**Friday 10 March 2017**

## **High school drop-out wins national teaching award**

A school principal who dropped out of school at 15 will receive a national award at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (ASG NEiTA) today at a ceremony in Melbourne.

Erica Prosser from Holy Spirit College (Cairns/Cooktown) is the only Queensland recipient and will join 12 other outstanding educators from across Australia in receiving the top awards.

Selected from more than 1350 nominations in 2016, the 13 national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

Ms Prosser is the foundation principal, literally building the school from the ground up and describes herself as a 'nonconformist' and 'maverick'. Ms Prosser who has a background in working with marginalised people in very remote Indigenous schools will receive an ASG NEiTA Leadership and Development Award.

Holy Spirit School is a 'Special Assistance School' which caters to students who have become disengaged from formal schooling, many of whom have criminal histories, substance abuse issues and volatile and unreliable behaviours and homes.

Ms Prosser says there is a gap in education for students on the margin.

"Much research and academic writing has occurred around the issues related to schooling and how to keep students engaged. However, there appears to be an absence of shared practical knowledge about working with young people, in assisting them to improve their outcomes, having become disengaged."

The school principal whose passion is fostered from her own personal experiences with education, started with eight rooms on a construction site in Cairns and an outreach school bus service for the Cooktown campus.

"I worked with staff to show them how we could operate. The staff all became enthusiastic about the possibilities and were prepared to follow me and my crazy idea.

I may be a nonconformist in the minds of traditional educators but I believe how and where I work is the future of education, which is already here."

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Ms Prosser is a wonderful ambassador for the teaching profession who was nominated by a community organisation for the positive impact she's had on students' lives and wellbeing.



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"Ms Prosser has earned the respect of the wider school community through her holistic approach to leading a team in working with adolescents to develop hope and in assisting them to make a positive difference in their own lives. I highly commend her efforts and the results she has seen in raising school attendance levels to almost 60 per cent, student participation in apprenticeship and traineeship programs and transforming aggressive, argumentative, loud mouthed youths into young people achieving success."

Parents, grandparents, secondary student councils, school boards, councils, parent associations, committees of management and community organisations throughout Australia nominated these inspirational recipients.

Chief Executive Officer of ASG NEiTA, John Velegrinis says the ASG NEiTA recipients have all been recognised by their local communities for making a genuine difference to education and for supporting the educational aspirations families have for their children.

"I congratulate Ms Prosser along with the other ASG NEiTA recipients. These outstanding teachers and educators have earned the respect of their communities through their hard work, building trusting relationships and ensuring their love for education gets passed on to their students, creating a culture of lifelong learning.

Teachers have an enormous responsibility and our ASG NEiTA recipients take on this responsibility with humility, striving to always be accountable for their actions, working beyond what is expected of them and expecting nothing in return. Their joy comes from the challenge of ensuring their students flourish academically and socially, giving students choices and offering holistic solutions. This is why ASG NEiTA has thrived for the last 22 years. The community thanks and applauds you for your contribution to teaching the next generation of young Australians."

The national awards are divided into four categories: leadership and development, innovation, community engagement and introducing, early career teacher. For more information on the 13 national awardees, including profiles go to: <http://www.asg.com.au/neita>

Eleven national award recipients will receive \$5000 professional development grants with one teacher getting the incredible opportunity to go to Space Camp in the U.S. One teacher is also awarded a \$2000 Disability Inclusion Grant.

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**For more information, please contact:**

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**Editor's notes:**

*The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 530,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.5 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members.*

*The ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) started in 1994 in Australia and 1996 in New Zealand. Since inception, more than 34,000 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries, with more than 1050 teachers receiving about \$940,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.*

For more information visit: [www.asg.com.au](http://www.asg.com.au)



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